

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-9 and 11-15 remain pending. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-19 and 11-14 were rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. It is respectfully submitted that the above amendments to claims 1 and 13 cure the indefiniteness vis-à-vis "distal end" as was noted by the Examiner.

Claims 1, 3, 4, and 11-14 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bazell et al. (USPN 3,884,242), in view of Inoue (USPN 5,100,386). In Figures 3 and 7 of the cited reference the structure of the distal tip member 19 is clearly shown as having a distal taper **in only its distal section**, i.e. between 21 and 26. The proximal section of the distal member, i.e. between 22 and 21 is shown and described as having a **proximal taper** (col 8, lines 6-8). As such, the cited reference teaches directly away from the present invention as claimed, to the extent that independent claims 1 and 13 specifically call for the distal tip member to have an outer surface that tapers distally from its **proximal-most end** to its distal-most end. It is therefore respectfully submitted that obviousness is effectively avoided.

Claims 6-9 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Bazell et al. (USPN 3,884,242). In light of the non-obviousness of independent claim 1 as

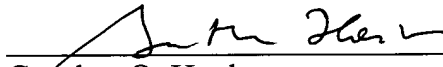
argued above, it is respectfully submitted that all claims depending therefrom similarly avoid obviousness.

The allowance of claim 15 is gratefully acknowledged.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, applicant earnestly believes the application to be in condition for allowance and respectfully requests that it be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

FULWIDER PATTON LEE & UTECHT, LLP

By:   
Gunther O. Hanke  
Registration No. 32,989

GOH:mjm

Howard Hughes Center  
6060 Center Drive, Tenth Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
Telephone: (310) 824-5555  
Facsimile: (310) 824-9696  
Customer No. 24201